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**National Elections Commission Inaugurates Its First Office Space**

JUBA -- With the support of nearly \$300,000 USD to date from the United States Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its implementing partner the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Republic of South Sudan's National Elections Commission (NEC) inaugurated its new temporary office on Tuesday, January 22. Present at the ceremony were the Deputy Governor of Central Equatoria State, Speaker of the Council of States, Chief Justice of South Sudan, the U.S. Ambassador and USAID Mission Director in South Sudan, Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), other national dignitaries, and international diplomats and organization representatives.

Following the enactment of the National Elections Act in July 2012, the NEC Commissioners were appointed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit on August 1, confirmed by the National Legislative Assembly on August 28, and sworn in on October 31. NEC Chairperson Professor Abednego Akok Kacuol opened the ceremony by introducing Deputy Chairperson Jersa Kide Barsaba, Chief Electoral Officer Mac Maika, and the six other commissioners.

Congratulatory remarks were also delivered by U.S. Ambassador to South Sudan Susan D. Page, UNMISS Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Hilde F. Johnson, Central Equatoria State Deputy Governor Manase Lomole, Speaker of Council of States Hon. Joseph Bol Chan, and former Chairperson of Sudan's National Elections Commission Hon. Abel Alier. The speakers welcomed the establishment of the NEC and stressed the importance of the institution for the development of democratic practices in South Sudan. Chief Justice Chan Reec Madut, who presented the keynote address, also unveiled the new NEC logo.

"The National Elections Commission will work to make the dream of a strong democracy possible, and give voice and power to the people of South Sudan," said U.S. Ambassador to South Sudan Susan D. Page.

With support from USAID, IFES is working with the newly established NEC to build its ability to conduct credible, democratic elections that represent the choices of the people of South Sudan.